

***Mobility, Space and Social Structuration in the Second Modernity and Beyond***  
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# **Mobility, Space and Social Structuration in the Second Modernity and Beyond**

*Magdalena Nowicka*

**Abstract** The recent social structuration theories speak about liquefaction. However, these liquid models fail to deliver satisfactory explanation of contemporary sociation; the thesis of this article is that this is due to insufficient reflection on space-time. Three points are to be discussed: 1) the questionable distinction between social and geographical space, which these models use to diagnose current patterns of social structuration as resulting from new time-space experience; 2) the certainty of periodisation, which privileges time over space; and 3) the persistence of a 'container' understanding of space. It is necessary to work out a better understanding of the current time-space relations on the one hand, and to develop a method to grasp conceptually the meta change on the other hand. The second can be achieved with the help of the theory of reflexive modernization. This theory, however, does not offer much insight on the exact time-space relations, thus the first postulate requires further empirical research. The article, basing on a study of mobile transnational professionals attempts to fulfill both postulates and to work out its own theoretical frameworks for researching mobility, spatialisation and social structuration.

## **Introduction**

Mobility is at the center of the debate on social structuration (Bauman 2000, Bonß and Kesselring 2001, Kesselring 2001, Kesselring and Vogl 2004, Kaufmann 2002, Urry 2003). The traditional sociological literature regards either social mobility as movement of individuals or groups between different positions within the system of social stratification in society, or geographical movement comprehended as a more or less permanent migration across symbolic or political boundaries. In contrast, these authors speak of mobility as a phenomena, which encompasses not only people and their geographical movements but also objects, information and images. There is also a tendency to abandon the division between social and geographical mobility (Kaufmann et al. 2004). Various authors believe it one of the principles of modernity (Bauman 2000, Bonß and Kesselring 2001, Bonß, Kesselring and Weiß 2004, Sennett 1998, Rammler 2001). The diagnosis is that social order becomes contingent and unusual due to a variety of flows (Urry 2003: 118). There are numerous networks and fluids roaming the globe that possess the power of rapid movement across, over and under many societal clusters, primarily those of nation states. It is investigated to what extent mobility can

be considered a generator of social change, especially of liquefaction of social structures. Liquefaction means that social structures constantly change, and the forms they take are temporary (Bauman 2000).

The models predicting liquefaction of social structures thus assign a paradigmatic role to mobility and its increase and acceleration. They also assume that mobility influences the existing spatial relations. This process has been induced by incorporation of national cultures and societies, otherwise celebrated as separated (Billig 1995, Martins 1974: 276, Smith 1983: 26, Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, Beck 2002, 2004), into global circuits of information channels and communication system (Urry 2003: 107). . An important consequence of this process is the change of social boundaries, including fluidification of nation-state borders. Thus, frontiers between cultures have to be negotiated anew and the spatial 'order of things' (Foucault 1994) changes.

These liquid models increasingly consider space as a source of change in contemporary socialization patterns. This approach has become common in the contemporary social sciences since the 1980s, one speaks of a 'spatial turn'. Either explicitly, like the liquid models, or implicitly, like complexity approaches (Thrift 1999, Urry 2003, 2004), they refer to a supposedly new, relational, fleeting and transitory, spatial order which undermines the current sociation. In this paper I focus only on the liquid models, because of the role they assign to mobility, which is the focus of my own empirical research. I start the paper with a review of how they comprehend of time-space. I show that they frequently support their judgments on the understanding of space and geographical mobility as separate from the social realm, and treat social mobility as individual structure positioning. Consequently, they draw conclusions on social change without working out the exact relationship between socialization and spatialisation and they fail to explain the last. They are inclined to undertake an understanding of space-time as interplay of proximity and distance, which fits particular needs like modernization and development coupled with acceleration. In doing so, they introduce a certain periodisation of modernity. They assert primacy of time over space and echo the concurrent public discourse on time-space according to which we live in the area of annihilation

of space, in particular of distance. Finally, they retain the container view on space, which has been tackled long before. All these struggles have led to the development of a relational understanding of space in philosophy and sociology at the beginning of twentieth century, and, almost one hundred years later, to the claim of cosmopolitan methodology (Beck 2006).

This observation calls into question the periodisations applied by the liquid models. I propose to analyze and extend them with the theory of reflexive modernization. This theory offers an alternative model of periodisation, which I confront with the findings from the empirical study. The theory distinguishes between the first and the second (reflexive) modernity and sees the changes in social structuration between these periods being a result of dissonances between the perspective of individual actors, their practices and reflections, collective interpretations and related actions, and that of scientific observers. When applied to the liquid models of analysis, the theory shows that they base on the first-modern understanding of space in their diagnosis of post-, light- or second-modern socialization. This dual incongruence of social realm and geographical space as well as first modern spatialisation and second-modern socialization is the exit thesis of the empirical inquiry.

I proceed with the analysis of spatialisation under the conditions of extensive mobility, based on my own empirical study within a group of mobile transnational professionals. I confront the results with the main theses of the liquid models and the theory of reflexive modernization. I conclude by proposing to focus the future research on contradictions and conflicts between the perspectives, to emphasise processes of stabilization rather than fluidification, to highlight the temporal dimensions of spatial relations and to revise the concept of periodisation as a mobile rather than stable principle.

### **Instruments of liquefaction**

The liquid models of analysis (Kaufmann 2002: 6) represent the view that mobility belongs to the melting powers (Bauman 2000: 6, Gane 2001: 269). The thesis is that the speed of circulation brings about the progressive weakening of the social structure and its categories in favor of a world organized around mobility (Urry 2004). The melting powers affect at first the

extant institutions constituting the frames of possible action-choices. However, mobility itself is not a direct cause of liquefaction. Rather, the new ways of interacting in space and time related to mobility of people and information melt the old social structures. At present, the patterns of communication and co-ordination between individually conducted life policies and political actions of human collectiveness change and affect the structures interlocking individual choices in collective projects and actions. The liquidizing powers have moved from the 'system' to 'society', from politics to life-policies or have descended from the macro to the micro level of social cohabitation (Bauman 2000: 7).

Identified as novel, this time-space experience has been conceptualized as compression (Harvey 1989, 1994, Jameson 1984, Virilio 1991, 1993, 1995) and distancing (Giddens 1990, 1991). This epochal story dates back to the eighteenth century when in most European countries comments are issued on the gathering speed of travel and communication, and the simple fact that as a result, places and people start to come closer together in time. According to these authors, the process of time-space compression affects the complete spatialities of traditional societies. Their limited incorporations are gradually replaced by a new world full of intermediary machines, which enable bodies to travel and communicate even more swiftly, thus rewriting the horizons of experience, including the notions of space (Harvey 1994: 61). In turn, space becomes a playground for the new modes of organization, especially that of the state, which is able to parcel out and govern territory in the ways heretofore undreamed of. As this process continues, it reaches its new millennial phase, in which spaces from diverse worlds seem to fall one into another (Harvey 1994: 71); space is fragmented and connected anew, or it dissolves (Virilio).

Harvey and Giddens understand time as standardized metric time, which they consider a key feature of modernity. Such measurable standard time 'distanciates' space, and provides the very basis for their recombination in ways that coordinate social activity without necessary reference to the particularities of place (Giddens 1990, 1991: 16). People, events, organizations and whole societies are no longer simply tied to single places or particular times. Instead, local times and people are tied with global agendas, standardized time horizons and

constantly shifting spatial arrangements. This process is crucial for the disembedding of social institutions, meaning a 'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts.

This heterogeneity is ascribed to space and refused to time (Jessop 2004: 6), wherein space is divided into smaller unique units, like in a kaleidoscope. The understanding of space and time in these concepts recalls the analyses of the first modernists like Benjamin or Simmel: their central concern was the discontinuous experience of time, space and causality as transitory, fleeting, and fortuitous or arbitrary (Frisby 1986: 4). Both concepts of compression and distancing ascribe a key role to the standardization and acceleration in the process of new structuration. The precedent of the concept of time-space distancing can be found in Simmel's considerations on abstractive thinking, which enables spanning larger spatial distances (Simmel 1958: 494, Kuhn 1994: 43). The echoes of Bergson's primacy of time over space also come to mind (Massey 2005: 21).

Further, the dominating idea in both concepts is the interplay of presence and absence (temporal dimension) and proximity and distance (spatial dimension). What Harvey observes is a change of relation between a unit of distance and unit of time required to overcome this distance. The consequence of the acceleration of mobility – the falling of diverse worlds together – is however unsure, a fact to which Simmel already drew attention. It is a peculiar modern dilemma that due to mobility, the relation of what is far and strange to what is close and familiar, is ambivalent (Allen 2000: 55). What is far does not necessarily have to be strange – this recognition questions the sanctity of presence (Shields 1992: 189). This dilemma is discussed by Simmel in his essay on the Stranger from 1908: the person who disturbs the status quo of a given locality, breaching its walls and bringing the places of everyday life into contact with indefinable, seemingly limitless spaces beyond (Simmel 1908: 510). The relations of far and close conceptualized as the "falling of spaces into another" (Harvey 1994: 71) and as the existence of multiple spaces, each of them characterized by different social formations, as well as the resulting possibility of change of perspectives, have been described at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some authors, for example Nietzsche and Jose Ortega y Gasset went even further and developed the philosophy of "perspectivism" which was

based on the novel spatial experience of relativity (Kern 1983: 132, 150f). Henri Picares identified visual, tactile and motor spaces, each of them having different characteristics. The proliferation of perspectives and the breakup of a homogeneous three-dimensional space found its expression in art of the modern age, most profoundly in Cubism. Simultaneously, the dynamics of spatial construction and the process of becoming in time and space were undertaken in the literature, for example by Proust or Joyce. These most innovative novelists of the period transformed the stage of modern literature from a series of fixed settings in a homogenous space into a multitude of qualitatively different spaces that varied with the shifting moods and perspectives of human consciousness (Kern 1983: 149).

Without doubt, the concepts of time-space compression and distancing are useful conceptualizations, which encompass the observations of the changing pattern of social-spatial experience initiated by the modernists and bring them into a broader framework of social change. Yet, whether or not these concepts and the changed spatialisation of presence and absence announced by them can alone fulfill the claim made by the liquid models of the radical change of social structuration at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is questionable (Shields 1992: 181).

### **Mobility-space-social structuration**

The concepts of time-space compression and distancing are the core of the liquid models. These models relate mobility in time-space, new time-space experience and change in social structuration. Their opponents claim this is indeed their weak point. They have been criticized for connecting the two orders of reality – the spatial and the social – that do not necessarily go together, because movement in geographical space may rather constrain possibilities to move in social space. Spatial mobility may not be a good indicator of social fluidity, according to the critics, who point out that the thesis of fluidification might be the result of inconsistent conceptualization and study of space (Kaufmann et al. 2004: 747). The alternative thesis argues that the normative value of mobility influences social positioning at the level of individuals (Sennett 1998). In this sense, Castells argues that increased mobility leads to the

distinction of a global mobile elite and the arising of a new social order in which a global well-connected leader-elite rules over a mass of locally bounded, altogether disconnected people (Castells 1996). Thus, the new social order is about shifting patterns of exclusion and inclusion based on the possibilities of access. Indeed, liquid modernity is characterized by qualitatively new spatio-temporal settings, yet at the same time, according to the authors like Harvey, Virilio or Bauman, space becomes increasingly irrelevant. Space no more sets limits to action and its effects, and counts little, or does not count at all (Bauman 2000: 117). Assuming the above, the liquid models care little about the exact role of space for social relations and its effects on social order despite explicitly relating it to the supposedly new space-time relations.

To disregard space as a factor structuring social realm is possible, in my judgment, as long as a clear-cut distinction between geographical and social space is presumed. A similar methodological assumption is common to many mobility studies<sup>1</sup>. Their implicit assumption is twofold – that space is a material matrix of movement and each place is a unit of space from which movement starts or in which it ends. Secondly, space is divided into container-like units, for example nation-states, between which movements occur and can be observed and measured. Therefore it is possible for these approaches to suspect that movement from country A to country B should be accompanied by social change, firstly at the level of individuals and their life-projects, and in consequence at the level of institutions reacting to the new life-politics. Though implicit, such an assumption runs alongside spatial determinism: movement between spatial units is assumed as a reason for movement in social space. On the other hand, this line of argumentation leads again to a paradox that space becomes unimportant: nation-states, between which movement takes place, are particular political and organizational systems and, to stay consistent with this approach, as such should be qualified rather as a social space. Any movement between them is thus a movement between differently structured social spaces, which possibly induces change in the social locations of moving individuals. The diagnosis of change is thus a mere shift of scale, and geographical space is merely a material matrix, a scene on which processes take place. Further, several authors tend to transfer the traditional distinction between geographical and social mobility onto space,



and speak of geographical and social spaces, and in each of movement (mobility) being possible (Kaufmann et al. 2004: 750). This geographical space is thus an empty, container-like space and as such is ignored by those studies, which focus predominantly on mobile individuals and their life-projects. Such an insufficient reflection on space that leads to the blind employment of a container understanding of space is typical to methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Paradoxically, it can also be found in those approaches, which explicitly try to tackle it. The key example can be the concept of transnational social spaces (Pries 1997: 17, Pries 2001a: 49, Pries 2001b: 55). It substitutes the nationally limited concept of society with the idea of a space (Bommes 2003: 103), which contains exactly the same kind of relationship as those typical to a nation state, however over which a single nation state has less control powers.

### **Periodisation**

The liquid models explicitly introduce a certain periodisation, which the concepts of time-space compression and of time-space distancing contain as well. They all try to explain changing patterns of social structuration by relating them to distinct time-space relations. Giddens distinguishes between pre-modern and modern settings, each of them having its own dominant concept of space. Harvey speaks of time-space compression as the process initiated by the technical revolution and achieving its new millennial stage. Bauman distinguishes two stages within modernity. The first 'heavy' period was characterized by the conquest of territory (compression) in contrast to the current stage of 'light' modernity, which started when space and time were separated from each other and from living practices (distancing). 'Light' modernity is characterized by exterritorialization of power and revenge of nomadism over the principle of territoriality and settlement (Bauman 2000: 11-13). Similarly, Lefebvre related particular modes of social structuration with space. Having established the notion of social space as produced, he historicized it as absolute-nature, sacred-historical, abstract-capitalist, and differential-contradictory (Lefebvre 1991). Foucault (1991: 66) as well claims that space and place are historical entities, subject to temporal change. Specific modalities in social

organization of space are the expression of a specific distribution of power, which is differently scattered and concentrated in different historical periods. In these approaches, time is suggested to be the ultimate ordering system of space and history turns into a series of epochs; to each of them an essentialized spatialisation of production modes is assigned. In each period the previous patterns of spatialisation persist, slowly become transformed, and finally give way to a new doctrine (Shields 1999: 170-177).

Other authors explain the change of social structuration by making a parallel between publicly shared and scientific notions of space and a variety of processes and concepts. Thus, instead of investigating into exact spatial relations, they sought for a change at the level of common understanding of space, connecting mutually fruitful laic and scientific imaginations. The way we imagine space has social and political effects, so the claim goes (Massey 2005: 4), but also the imagination of space results from development of the general understanding of the world around us. For example, the conceptualizations of space were directly linked with theology in the Middle Ages. Space was considered infinite, as God is infinite; it exists without relation to anything outside of it; it is absolute and cannot be comprehended by humans (Ariew 1985, Casey 1998: 106). In the following era of expansion of physics over alchemy, philosophy over theology, and politics over religion, the idea of infinite space was combined by Newton with the concept of relative space in which motion can be measured (Rynasiewicz 1995). Such space could be assessed, and objects, which are in this space, could be related to each other, positioned in a particular order. Again, these developments relate to the birth of comprehension of space as 'site' or 'striated space', as Deleuze names them (Deleuze and Guattari 1976, Casey unpublished, Doel 1996). This refers to the leveled-down, emptied-out, planiform residuum. Such space is powerless; it does not retain any of the inherent properties of encompassing, holding sustaining or gathering. It can be a location of a function (for example as a territory of a state), or knowledge, as shown by Foucault (1973, 1977) and serve the particular needs of an institution that demands a certain specific form of a building, which is its location, its residence. Furthermore, secularization and diminishing anthropocentrism can be related to the comprehension of space as heterogeneous, depending on the observer and

location. This change was brought about by natural scientists (such as Elie de Cyon and Jacob von Uexküll), who investigated into the spatial orientation of living organisms. As early as 1903, when Emil Durkheim and Marcel Mauss published “Primitive classification”, the heterogeneity of spaces and spatial experience were assigned to humans as well: space varies from society to society and within societies, as it has different properties in different regions.

The periodisation of social structuration related to changing spatial relations has also been popularized by the American sociology of the twentieth century, which claimed that the modern world was the product of transition from a place-based community to a placeless or national society. When the modernizing forces of society overpower the traditional forces of community, place is overpowered too and continues to exist only as the location of nationally defined social activities (Agnew 1989: 12). This idea dates Tönnies’ dichotomy of *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* (1887) and Weber’s perspective on community as based on subjective feeling in contrast to the rationality of national social relationships.

Against these models of periodisation speaks the detailed review of concepts of space in philosophy and sociology. It leads to recognition that particular understandings of space served particular needs in society, and that more than one concept can exist simultaneously. The different imaginations necessarily coexist, although not without tensions. Conceiving space as absolute served well the secular idea of modernization and development. Relative space enabled measurement and order positioning. The nineteenth century was a period of immense social change and perceived disorder in social relations, a time of economic discontent and political revolt. In this framework, it is understood that the concept of unlimited space, especially in relation to movement, offered a fertile ground for considering modern developments of speed. Freed from the limiting relativity of a place, a body could move in infinite space. The empty space matched the experience of acceleration and the apparently unrestrained possibilities of moving from place to place. Such uniform space enables discoveries and conquest of new territories, but also imagining the world as one and explaining any differences between cultures as a difference in the level of development, thus placing them on a temporal scale, instead of accepting the heterogeneity of space (Massey 2005: 5, 81ff).

Yet such empty infinite space was inconsistent with the experience of being in a particular community of a small village, so the relative versus absolute controversy heated towards the twentieth century instead of dissolving. Such disorientations, disjunctions and dislocation were taken up in a variety of ways in the literary, artistic and scientific movements of the late nineteenth century (Frisby 1986: 4), though their birth can be traced back to the eighteenth century and the dominant royalist and aristocratic politics of the period also had much to do with “knowing one’s place” in society (Casey 1998: 183), and they continue in the postmodern rhetoric.

When explaining the contemporary social structuration, the adaptation of the periodisation of the liquid models, as well as the alternatives offered by authors as Lefebvre, leads to at least two dilemmas: at the methodological level, we need to ask what is new in spatial experience of the twenty first century if the dualisms of near and far, absent and present, relative or absolute and place or space were vividly present already at least a century ago. At the analytical and empirical level, we need to ask how we can move the research beyond these dualisms and beyond the public discourse of space-time to describe the actual spatial relations and their role in structuring the social realm. Shields (1992) drew attention to this problem saying that the concepts of time-space compression and distancing focus exclusively on relations of proximity and distance, which were inherent to the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century. He concluded that we cannot state a radical change in social structuration as the shift from modernity to post-modernity, yet he overlooked the actual problems of these models and their periodisation, which does not go beyond the search of a meta-change at the level of either individual time-space experience or at the level of scientific or public discourse on space. Therefore, these models repeat the dualism of relative-absolute, space-society, place-space, etc. instead of analyzing the dynamics of socio-spatial structuration as a whole, integrating the scientific and public reflection with practices of individuals and institutions. Other authors suggested instead, that there is no meta-change, no change of the system but it is only within a system (König 1979: 360) that the great transformation (Polanyi 1973) is observable. Only certain moments of discontinuity can be described but there is no consensus

how radical such discontinuities must be in order to conceptualize them justly as meta-changes (Latour 1995, Smelser 2003). Concerning space, the question is, thus, whether or not spatial relations have transformed to such an extent that the thesis of a shift to a new epoch of spatial relations and the thesis of radical changes to social structuration induced by these new spatial relations can be justified.

## **Dissonances**

These concerns addressed by now can be better conceptualized in the framework of the theory of reflexive modernization (Beck and Bonß 2001, Beck, Bonß and Lau 2003, Beck and Lau 2004). It offers an alternative periodisation distinguishing between two periods within modernity: the first (simple) and the second (reflexive). In the course of modernization, the very coordinates, categories and the conception of change itself have undergone transformation (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994, Beck and Bonß 2001, Beck, Bonß and Lau 2003, 2004). Thus, discontinuity results from continuity (Adam 2003: 60). This meta-change takes place within modernity; it means that modernity has not vanished but it is becoming extremely problematic. While social change has always been (a desired) part of modernity, the transition from the first to the second modernity revolutionizes its premises and basic institutions. By premises of modernity, the theory of reflexive modernization understands the foundations of its self-description: the explicit or implicit assumptions expressed in the actions and self-understanding of citizens, the goals of politics and the routines of social institutions. The first modern premises were the nation state, individualization, gainful employment societies, a concept of nature and its exploitation, rationality, and the principle of functional differentiation (Beck, Bonß and Lau 2003). These premises were a basis for the development of the social institutions like nation states, nuclear family or class structure.

Can space be understood as the premise of modernity, which undergoes a change? At the first glance, it cannot, as we tend to understand space as a matrix, a physical surface. Under these circumstances, only a particular notion of space could constitute a premise of any particular epoch. Consequently, the notion of premise would need to be limited to a meta-

ideology, which certainly is not the intention of the authors of the theory of reflexive modernization. However, undertaking Lefebvre's definition of space (or spatialisation) as constituted of three inseparable components – lived, perceived and conceived space – it corresponds to the notion of the premises in the sense of the theory of reflexive modernization. This premise is a basis of institutions: nation state, nuclear family or capitalism. Assuming that the first modern principle was an abstract space, it corresponds to a particular mode of production, in which capital is disembedded from the particularities of a place and freely located. A distinction of spatial units is consistent with the territorial exclusiveness of nation states, and a principal division between geographical and social space underlies the territorial embeddedness of a nuclear family as a unit assigned to a particular place.

As the change takes place within modernity, the processes of dissolution of old structure is accompanied by reassertion of some of the institutions, though in their changed role, or by some prevalent concepts. The tensions associated with these transformations can be termed boundary management. Thus, the problem of dating precisely the social change becomes less relevant: the change is an irregular process that stretches over large spans of time, its velocity varying at each level (of individuals, institutions or scientific observers). The theory of reflexive modernization sets the following general time framework: the first modernity started at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and finished around 1960; the second, reflexive modernity starts when modernization has dealt with its problems, unintended consequences and contradictions.

Yet the claim made by the theory of reflexive modernization is that a structural change is located not in the transition of basic premises understood as a common, agreed notion (for example that of space) but in the categorial dissonance between the three perspectives: of actors and their self-reflexivity, scientific observer and the public (Beck, Bonß and Lau 2004: 57). When applied to the question of spatial relations, three levels emerge: the theory of space (its scientific and philosophical notions), the spatial discourse (the role and meaning assigned to space by groups and single actors), and the level of individual and collective practices which make use of space and produce it.

Accordingly, the first modernity was characterized by categorial consonance between actors', scientists' and the public's perspectives, despite all textual differences. Categorial consonance means often latent, as well as unproblematic, presumed principles, a knowledge constellation, within which programmatic-textual conflicts are articulated. For example, common nation-state framework is such a categorial consonance enclosing all three perspectives, not excluding the existence of content dissonances between marxists and functionalists (Beck, Bonß and Lau 2004: 56). This categorial consonance shatters in the transition to the second modernity. The theory points to the fragmentation of actors' self-reflection and scientific observers' perspective (which relativized all perspectives) as being the triggering factor. In other words, it influences the premises in consequence of which the basic social institutions undergo a change (Beck and Bonß 2001, Beck, Bonß and Lau 2004: 21). Searching for a radical change in any of these dimensions taken separately is problematic and disappointing. At this point appears the first incongruity with the discussed liquid models, which see the currently happening radical change of social structuration in the changed spatio-temporal relations. The deficiencies of the liquid models can be conceptualized according to the theory of reflexive modernization as a faulty application of first modern concepts of time-space to diagnose the second modern social structuration.

The claim made by the theory of reflexive modernization has thus significant methodological consequences: any analysis and empirical research should not be restrained to a single dimension but must investigate at all three levels. Secondly, it needs to break with the methodological nationalism, which unifies the three dimensions within a single interpretation.

Strangely enough, the theory of reflexive modernization has not applied its own model to the problematic of space. Instead, it goes into two directions: at the theoretical level, it sees the transition from the first to the second modernity in relation to space in the end of homogenization between space and time, space and population, and past and future (Beck and Bonß 2001: 30). Thereby it reduces the space-time dimension to the problem of methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) within which space was

understood as divided into nation-states territories and ordered accordingly to a certain temporal, national principle. However, both notions: space and time are relevant in this concept only in relation to a population (nation-state population or a society) to support the thesis of binding national societies to a particular, nationally structured territory and a particular, nationally “written” history. As society, time and space are seen as containers. Although the break with an idea of the homogeneity of society and nation state territory is a break with methodological nationalism, it does not lead to abandoning a notion of space as container-like. The role of a nation state in modern spatialisation should definitely not be underestimated, yet modern spatialisation cannot be reduced to this aspect.

At the empirical level, it supports the theses in the liquid models of analysis by introducing the triad mobility-space-social structuration. Like these models, it focuses on the relationship between geographical and social mobility (Bonß and Kesselring 2001), yet it seeks the transition in transformations of mobility, rather than of time-space relations. It argues the change of mobility as a basis principle of modernity lies in the separation of geographical and social mobility and the disembedding of the latter from space-time (Bonß and Kesselring 2001: 189, Bonß, Kesselring and Weiß 2004: 261). Further, it links the transition to the bursting out of the equalization between movement (in space) and movability, and thereby the dramatic reduction in spatial power to structure the social (Bonß, Kesselring and Weiß 2004: 278). By this means, it draws attention to the dualisms: geographical-social movement, geographical-social space, mobility-immobility, physical-virtual and their spatial and temporal equivalents: near-far, here-there, absent-present, now-then. The thesis of dissolution of such dualisms is the core of the postmodern reflection (Shields 1992). Focusing exclusively on a transformation of mobility, however, does not sufficiently support the thesis of their dissolution; paradoxically it supports their understanding as dichotomies rather than two facets of a coin, despite that its theoretical claim of shifting boundaries and contextuality of arrangements refers to a relational understanding of space as being a results of fluctuating patterns of relationships.



## **Contemporary spatialisation**

In line with the theory of reflexive modernization, the change from the first to the second modernity should be accompanied by dissonances between the individual practices in space, public use and discourse on space, and scientific interpretation. The dissonance can be driven by processes within any of these dimensions, or in all three simultaneously. Especially in relation to space, this is an important point: the impulse of the shift towards reflexive modernization cannot be conceptualized as the “reflective” reaction of sciences to misplaced actions in the society and the dominant logic of space, as naturalization which becomes visible, calls for reflection and becomes de-constructed, as Adam claims in relation to time (Adam 2003: 60). Methodological ‘isms’ of social sciences (nationalism, territorialism or temporalism that analyze societies only within the container categories of nation, territory or history), and their recent de-construction, are (only) a part of this broader change. Accordingly to the theory of reflexive modernization, the dissonances between the categories lead to de-naturalization of the first modern space, in result of which, space as a premise of the first modernity is altered so that it achieves its new, second modern form. This involves an institutional and individual response. It can be expected that the change is accompanied by conflicts, attempts to restore the old notions, or smooth adaptation to new conditions. Possibly, institutional and individual responses differ, which can be recognized in the empirical research.

The earlier presented analysis of the liquid models and other modes of periodisation proved that stating an essential shift alone at the level of theory of space is problematic. The disjunctions, kaleidoscopic space, multiplicity of space and spatial experience, its transitory character, disembeddedness of human actions from the particularities of place, all these had already been bothering thinkers long before. When further analyzing the contemporary literature, it turns out that with the growing interest of social science in global flows and interdependences, and role of localities in globalization, the scientific thought made a circle towards the spatial dualisms, which phenomenology (Simmel, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger) tried with some success to tackle: relative versus absolute space, place versus space, near-far, present-absent, and their social equivalents: embedded-disembedded, local-

global, or excluded-included (Casey 1998, Agnew 1989, Frisby 1986, Kuhn 1994). Hand in hand with the focus on networks, it directed again its attention towards the relative concepts of space (Mol and Law 1994, Hetherington 1997). Parallel, the recent conceptualizations considered space as an ongoing and dynamic process and an ingredient in something else (Foucault, Braudel, Berry, Snyder, Nancy, Lefebvre, Bachelard, Soja, Entekin, Deleuze and Guattari, Eisenman, Tschumi, Irigaray). Confusingly, migration studies apply the concept of transnational social spaces, which is based on the notion of container-space, metaphoric understanding of a social space, and its division from geographical space (Pries 2000, Bommes 2003).

At the level of contemporary public discourse on space, what is striking is its nation-state naturalization: division of space into container-like units equalized with territories of nation states (Rumford 2004) or large cultural clusters (Huntington 1996, Gerhards 2005). Further, space is considered in the categories of access and exclusion, and this at all scales – from gendered access spaces of everyday life (Löw 1995) to new inequalities of access based on the development and extension of technological networks (Urry 2003), as well as the primarily nation-state or ethnic and religion structured debate on exclusiveness of spatial units. This discourse mirrors in the individual reflection on space, which at least to the mobile individuals seems borderless and accessible (Nowicka 2005). This impression relates to the functional irrelevance of nation-states borders, which mobile people cross without difficulty. This movement does not induce any change of their mundane practices.

Many authors try to prove a radical change only at the level of individual practices, especially in relation to geographical mobility. Yet, any claims to an increase of geographical mobility are highly controversial – most of the population stays immobile, despite the fact that the average distances covered during a trip have increased, the number of journeys per person per day has remained stable and pedestrian mobility is in constant decline. International tourism is increasing but at the cost of resorts in several countries (Kaufmann 2002). Local mobility is losing ground to new forms of mobility like long distance commuting. Likewise, although we are witnessing a growth of transmitted information in terms of volume, any

accompanying growth in the reception of this information is questionable. A lot of attention has been directed to the new possibilities of socialization thanks to the long-distance communication and the so-called virtual mobility, yet their influence on spatial patterns of social structuration remains largely uninvestigated. Many forms of structuration, which are believed to be an outcome of mobile forms of dwelling, are not exclusively the product of mobility. Rather, the focus on mobility blinds the observers to the different contexts in which similar structuration takes place. The question is whether geographical mobility has a power to restructure the spatial order of things in the second modernity, and whether this structuration is distinctive from the previous periods in modernity.

### **Cosmologies of transnational professionals**

These questions I attempt to answer based on the results of a group study of mobile transnational professionals. The presented empirical material is a part of a study conducted between December 2002 and September 2004 in the framework of a Ph.D. project in the Institute of Sociology at the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich, Germany. The sample consisted of highly mobile individuals who are employees of an international organization. They are functionally disembedded from nation states due to a full inclusion in the structures of the organization, which includes their own pension, medical and retirement plans, and immunity from national taxation systems and other obligations. The study was concerned with how mobile transnational professionals constitute their spatial cosmologies in daily practices. It investigated into processes of spatialisation at all levels, from constitution of home to setting of borders between cultures.

I focused on mobility understood as geographical movement of individuals, irrespectively of its duration and frequency and of their consequence for the social positioning of the informants. The sample consisted of frequent travelers as well as of people who changed their place of residence. Mobility was interesting to me as a practice thanks to which individuals get into contact with a large number of places and their inhabitants and political, organization and social systems adopted by them. At the same time, mobile individuals may disconnect

from communities of their origin and use the opportunity to choose where and how they form their lives. This theoretical assumption has been under investigation during the analysis. I have tried to restrain from pre-defining space when theoretically approaching the subject as well as when conducting the research. I did not ask the interview partners about their explicit comprehension of space nor did I inform them about established definitions. The interviews centered on their daily practices and how they experience the world around them. However, formulating the research question prerequisites that the underlying idea of space is that of construction. At the same time, the study recognizes the achievements of various authors, who drew the attention to the importance of space for social relations. Assuming empty absolute space would mean accepting that space as such has no effects and thus any inquiry into exact spatial relations is unnecessary.

The question driving the empirical research was if and how geographical mobility challenges the spatial frames to which the individuals are accustomed; if they wrench out of them and what consequences this has; how, if at all, these frames become transformed; and which new frames are being constituted in the practices of these individuals. Further, in case of a positive answer, the question can be put if a thesis of a shift towards a new stage in modernity (or to post-modern period) can be kept, and which model applies the best, or if the empirical results suggest a new mode of explanation.

Below I present the selected results and confront them with some of the main theses discussed above. I focus on the dualisms, which found a prominent place in the discussion on the changing nature of space and social structuration. When we look at the catalogue of dualisms, which have bothered the observers of modernity such as Simmel, we see that presence and absence motivated a set of metaphors of inclusion and exclusion (Shields 1992: 191). The spatial dualisms of near and far and their temporal counterpart presence and absence, were combined with further dualisms (Sayer 1991). The problem – and the source of a change – lies in their constellation. The (first) modernity was characterized by linking categories into dichotomy pairs: inclusion-exclusion, presence-absence, space-place, local-global, immobility-mobility, and attachment-disembeddedness. More important, inclusion was

linked with presence, proximity, attachment, place, and locality, while exclusion associated with absence, distance, disembeddedness, mobility, space and globality. Such constellations have their political meaning and can be employed for example to exclude certain groups (on political consequences of particular imagination of space see also Massey 2005, multiple pages). Often, mobile individuals are considered to be uprooted or disconnected (Malkki 1997), and local communities are believed to be disadvantaged because they are disconnected from each other and from 'spaces of flow' constituted by mobile elites (Castells 1996).

I considered in detail whether these dualisms are relevant for the mobile individuals, whether and how they related them to each other, or construct other pairs. I focus below on two dualisms, which were broadly discussed in the postmodern literature, enjoy a prominent role in the liquid models, and were undertaken by the theory of reflexive modernization, which claims that such dualisms cannot be understood as dichotomies (mutually exclusive aspects). First is the problem of inclusion and exclusion, and second the issue of embeddedness and disembeddedness, both of them relating to the question of proximity and distance. The postmodern discourse increasingly focused on the dualism of presence and absence in relation to the development of communication technology and globalization (Beck 1987, Giddens 1990, Berger 1999). It has pointed to the notwithstanding high relevance of this duality in each personal relationship but also at increasing mutual interdependency with distant people, events and decisions in the globalised world (Giddens 1990, Robertson 1992, 1998). Globalisation is also considered a factor disembedding mobile people, goods and information from particular places. These (qualitatively new and powerful) flows are opposed to locally embedded, territorially fixed cultures (Berking 1998: 383). All these developments are said to cause a change of spatial relations, which marks the transition to light modernity or postmodernity. On contrary, the theory of reflexive modernization would claim that such binary schematizations and clear-cut boundaries were the feature of the first modernity. Under the conditions of extensive mobility, such demarcations turn out to be artificial or even impossible to maintain (Beck, Giddens and Lau 1994, Beck and Bonß 2001, Beck, Bonß and Lau 2003).

Two examples are especially interesting because they not only show the relevance of such dichotomies in daily practices but they also tend to confirm the thesis of dissonance, and at the same time address the differentiation between the stages in modernity. The first demonstrates the dissonance between individual practices and collective observers; the second between individual practices and their scientific interpretation, though these dimensions can only analytically be so sharply distinguished. Indeed, they confirm and extend the results of anthropologists such as Gupta and Ferguson (1997) or Oakes (1993) who have contested the opposition between locality and the space of flows (p. 63) and challenged the neat periodisation schematized by Giddens and others.

### **Inclusion – exclusion**

The research revealed that presence and absence are of key importance to the interviewed individuals, yet not as absolute categories, which are mutually exclusive, but as gradual change of quality of interaction (Nowicka forth.). My informants are frequent travelers and migrants. It means, they are away much of the time: from their parental home, their immediate family, friends and relatives, as well as from their work colleagues (either in their main office when they travel, or in any of other offices in their destinations, when they are present in their main location). For mobile individuals, the dualism of presence and absence is a part of normality and the intrinsic ingredient of mundane activities. Presence and absence are dealt with, mediated and coordinated daily. For these people, the distance communication tools are often the only possibility to remain connected with those whom they leave behind, and they rely on them frequently. The first impression from the interviews is that the remote communication wipes away any physical or political borders between people, and tends to annihilate distance. Yet I looked closer at how mobile individuals manage their absence, communicate in distance, experience the difference between being physically present and absent in place, and how they develop and sustain their social networks.

On no account can the instruments of distance communication replace face-to-face interaction, my informants confirmed. Personal contact in physical proximity remains the most important form of communication. There are several reasons for this, the interviewees say.

Firstly, most people are used to communicating face-to-face and avoid mediated communication, which they do not trust or consider difficult. More important, one can benefit more from the 'personal touch' that face-to-face meetings have, especially when discussed issues are complex or problematic and require detailed conversation. Body language is necessary to understand the motivations and decisions of the partners. Personal encounter contains another aspect: one not only meets, one meets places. Distance communication disconnects people from their environments. When communicating over phone or Internet, the partners do not get an impression on how the other lives, how she or he fits to the surrounding, and how the location may influence this person. Being physically present in place gives a much better understanding of the situation of a particular person. When in place, one can talk to many people, see the streets, get the idea of living conditions of people, etc. This knowledge gives my informants greater satisfaction from communication, performing the tasks in the job, and personal relationships. One can participate in the stories of others better when in spatial proximity. Otherwise, the others are experienced as being 'caught in the moment', immobilized and atemporalised, as extracted from spatial and temporal contexts. In turn, spatial distance increases emotional distance. Therefore, the forms of communication are in their opinion not interchangeable. The form of communication influences its content. Complex and difficult business issues, which require imparting trust and empathy and when any misunderstandings would have serious consequences, should be better discussed face-to-face. Similarly, the personal conversations with the use of media are limited to regular updates and exchange of most urgent information. One does not talk about emotions on the phone, and not about "really important things", said one of my informants. One cannot always "call mummy when not knowing which spice to add to a soup", said another one. Relationships to the nearest and dearest suffer therefore under the physical distance. Although ties between children and parents cannot be disturbed by spatial separations, friendships are often in danger, and only true friends withstand the difficulties of the mobile life-style of my informants.

The relationships in proximity and distance are qualitatively distinct and inconvertible, despite the fact that interaction over a distance became a banal part of everyday life. Within

the social networks that span over traditional boundaries proximity stops being metric and turns out to be about the content of the message, the things being discussed or agreed upon; distance transforms into a matter of time, money, access, or effort needed for the transfer of information.

More important, presence itself is ambivalent. It becomes apparent when analyzing the mobile individuals' relations to places (Nowicka 2006). The mobile individuals sustain their relationships to more than one distant locality and remain a part of "elsewhere". For a certain time they are an integral part of a place, yet their physical presence in a place does not mean a simple and durable attachment to it, understood as participation in the local community. The temporality, and the choice of the form and the extent of the attachment and involvement, which is to a large degree mediated also with the non-local inhabitants and over-local networks, stresses the ambivalence of proximity, especially in relation to inclusion, participation, and attachment.

In their places of residence, the mobile individuals easily escape the category of insiders, also in the case of return migration. The very specific experience of migration, attachment to multiple groups and locations, makes them become "strangers at home". Most of their friends do not understand their way of life and the problems related to extensive mobility, claim the informants. They complain that their frequent absences keep them from participating in any group activities or associations. They even have problems to attend language courses, because any activity requiring regularity is steadily interrupted by the periods of travel. Their friends are tired of scheduling meetings or organizing parties only then, when their mobile colleagues happen to be in town. Slowly, they detach from the communities in which they live.

In their destinations, they are an invisible group and as such are not clearly excluded from the society, which hardly ever notices their presence. This is amplified by the possibility offered by transnational networks to regulate their own exposure to places, cultures and communities (Nowicka 2006). These networks of foreigners and expatriates, English speaking television, cinemas and bookstores, etc. but also the "local" infrastructure like supermarkets,



translations, translators and interpreters, fitness studios, which support the individualized, de-localized practices (by hampering direct contacts with the inhabitants and the language) enable any foreigner to decide whether or not to encounter the “unknown” and the specific about the place. If they do, they act as experts and as tourists; both roles appearing in different contexts. For example, they may have a more or less direct influence on political and economic developments in a country where they conduct their projects, though they are themselves never affected by these decisions. They play the role of experts when they passively encounter a place: they read about a country, are interested in its history, go to exhibitions of native artists, read the books of local authors, though they always run into the danger of repeating stereotypes transported by these media. They discover the connections between their country of origin and the place of settlement, though they do not establish such connections as would be of greater durability. At the same time, they are tourists in a country. They choose the kind of leisure activities, which are typical to tourists. They travel a lot, are interested in architecture, famous monuments and art. Although they are convinced of being more than tourists are, as they do not stay at the surface of things and extend their knowledge, their practices do not differ significantly from those of tourists.

Presence and proximity, absence and distance, are no longer an indicator of insider status, of citizenship, or of cultural membership. Presence and absence at first become uncoupled from inclusion and exclusion, and then connected with them in a new pattern. For mobile individuals, what should be present – the immediate family, best friends, relatives – are often absent. The contrary is true, too – what should be absent according to the old regime, institutionalized in modernity – the “strangers”, the cultural others – are often physically present. At the same time, the quality of relationships blurs the distinction between physical and mental proximity in a new way.

### **Embeddedness and disembeddedness**

The ambivalences of presence point to the dichotomy of embeddedness and disembeddedness. In the researched sample, this dichotomy was doubly relevant: not only are the individuals highly mobile and change their places of residence regularly, but they are also

functionally excluded from nation states and included in the institutional networks of the international organization, which follows the non-territorial principle of fixation (Nowicka 2004a). The organization has its own retirement plan, offers medical services to its employees, and provides resettlement benefits and support networks, including advice on housing or schooling, and job search for spouses. Its employees do not pay income taxes and they enjoy immunities from immigration restrictions. They are not a subject to any national social system. Furthermore, they are embedded in networks of offices and communication technologies, which span over the globe, and their social networks and way of life are internationalized. Many of them are bi or trilingual, and mixed-nationalities marriages among them are common. The individuals's choices of location of home are driven by factors not related to a particular geographical location: predominantly job and education opportunities. Often, the informants' preferred or dream future place of residence is anywhere where they have interesting leisure offers, and can socialize easily. A place called home is for them anywhere where their family is, where they are surrounded by objects they own, and where they feel well in the surrounding of people, landscape, architecture and infrastructure. One can say that they are attached to homes, which are mobile. Many of the informants cannot geographically locate their home, and laugh it is in the middle of Atlantic or point to multiple localities (Nowicka 2004b).

However, the immersion in the transnational networks, flexibility and temporality of the individual decision on location should not be mistaken for either territorial disembodiedness or uprootedness. Rather, it is an indication of a breakup with territorial dictate and the sign of individual spatial freedom. Although many aspects of life are not permanently fixed to a particular singular place, certain aspects remain localized in a social sense. The interplay of 'attachment' and 'disembodiedness' is about participation in stories that happen through the time in a place. One of the informants said, he may visit his parents across the Atlantic only once in a couple of years; yet when he is there for a month he eats only local specialties, reads local newspapers, vividly discusses local problems with the neighbours and participates with his mom in the meetings of a local association. Then he lives for another couple of years and he does not miss any of these experiences, and the local community does not notice his

absence as well, the life there goes on smoothly without him. Being physically present in another place means to miss part of the story of this place.

The moral claims of attachment to place are of greater relevance to the mobile individuals than being present itself. This is the claim of continuity, the expectation that physical presence guarantees the continuous participation in the life of a place, its development, its trajectories. They are confronted with this claim everyday, and they experience it as a pressure, a postulate which they cannot fulfil, to the disappointment of the local inhabitants and their own. Further, they (usually irreflexively) redefine what it means to be local: local is to be in a particular place in a particular time and to be affected by events happening in this time in this place and to react to them. The last two components of this definition often do not apply to my mobile informants. In their destinations, their work influences politics and economy of a place, yet they are not affected by these changes. In any location, they are functionally disembedded through the inclusion in the structures of the organization where they work.

In place, two competing logics meet: national (regional) and cosmopolitan (network), and two complementary discourses: that of national affiliation and that of access (Galasinska et al. 2002). Both discourses are supported by mobile individuals and long-term settlers, and they relate to the same place. The first, national, logic attempts to set clear boundaries between individuals and groups by assigning them to particular spaces, which are labeled as national. This is the regional, container logic, which employs the existing categories, like nation, race, etc. and makes them durable through relating them to particular, exclusive units of space. The mobile individuals categorize the local inhabitants using national labels and assign them to particular territories. The same strategy they experience as guests to a country. Diego, one of the informants, who comes from Argentina, and whose skin is dark, was categorized by his Saudi Arabian host society as Mexican immigrant in the USA (ethnic – territorial categorization) and after 09/11 Saudis excused him (US-American citizen, in their eyes) for the terroristic attacks. Within this logic, individual qualities (of humans and of places) are subordinated, and any differences between them are suppressed (Mol and Law 1994). Within this logic, the categories of uprootedness (Malkki 1997, Ahmed 2003) or homelessness and

disembodiedness make sense. Someone, who is mobile and frequently away, or someone who left due to migration, does not belong any longer to this place. This person is not any longer simply 'local'. Reiner, another informant, says that mobility disembeds – from places and from people, to whom you gradually become a stranger. Someone, who is a newcomer in a place, and is 'different' from its inhabitants (has a different race or nationality, or is a member of another cultural group) does not belong either. My informants are often feeling excluded and pushed into a group of expatriates, even if they develop affective attachments to their host place (Nowicka 2006).

The accessibility discourse is a discourse of everyday practices and it stresses the openness of groups and spaces, at the same time denaturalizing national labels. It is based on universal values connecting all humans on one hand and on well-functioning transnational networks on the other hand. This discourse recognizes that it is increasingly difficult to assign people to concrete territories. Accessibility, however, does not depend on inclusiveness, on a common living space. It rather questions the territorial borders between groups, cultures, languages, or nations, without making other boundaries irrelevant. It appears as the most relevant and socially tense issue. It questions the status of insiders and outsiders in the 'figuration of the nation state' (Rundell 2004: 92) and calls for new differentiation strategies between 'us' and 'them' (Beck-Gernsheim 2004). In turn, such differentiation is not secondary to existing territorial borders, but rather the territorial demarcation appears in the process of redefining who belongs and who does not, who is the insider and who is the outsider, who is a member or not, a foreigner of a local, and setting such boundaries anew.

### **Spatialisation in the second modernity and beyond**

The tensions between the two discussed discourses, between mobile individuals and settled host communities, between regional and network logics of spatial fixation, between individual practices, their collective judgments and scientific interpretations constitute under our very eyes the contemporary spatialities. The question of interest to this article is, whether

or not they correspond to the diagnoses of the liquid and postmodern models and the thesis of dissonance put by the theory of reflexive modernization.

The liquid models tend to overestimate the scope of change of human spatialisation, especially in respect to time-space compression and the role of mobility and its acceleration, yet at the same time they flatten the picture and fail to describe sophisticated nuances of time-spatial relations. The empirical findings show that the spatial dualisms (and each of their aspects on its own) of proximity and distance, absence and presence, embeddedness and detachment, and inclusion and exclusion are relevant, and each of the spatial relations becomes increasingly ambivalent. This ambivalence is managed daily, new solutions are worked-out steadily. More important, each of these pairs becomes uncoupled and re-connected in new configurations: for example, presence and proximity does not necessarily relate to inclusion, and absence to exclusion, although exactly such dichotomised pairs appear in the political discourse in relation to migrants. The theory of reflexive modernization, on contrary, underestimated the importance of space as a premise of modernity. Its thesis that sharp distinctions between presence and absence or embeddedness and detachment can only partly be confirmed by the empirical results. In most contexts, the distinctions remain clear-cut, as the example of experiencing presence and absence by mobile individuals demonstrates. However, de-coupling of the dual-pairs from each other influences the understanding of the meaning of proximity or absence for mobile individuals. In this respect, the thesis of blurring boundaries between categories can be sustained.

Certainly, the theory of reflexive modernization offers an interesting approach in which spatial relations can be researched as a dynamic process full of contradictions and repetitions. According to the theory, there is no simple causality, which the liquid models would like to see. The short overview of the development of thought on space illustrates this thesis best. In this approach, space cannot be understood as a simple determinant of social change, and it cannot be separated from it. The old, the changed and the new forms appear at the same time, influencing one another, and these at all levels: of the scientific notions of space, discourse on space and practices in space. The categorial consonance between these three perspectives

is broken. For example, alone the expansion of networks or acceleration of transfer cannot be mistaken for a beginning of a completely different, new era. Yet the effects that this expansion of networks has on regional logic, and the fact that it questions old boundaries, can be considered as signs of a new period within modernity, in which container space, regional logic and national discourse are still relevant yet ambivalent to individuals and institution, single life policy makers and global system politics. Similarly, as perfectly shown by Doreen Massey (2005), the discourse on space is being influenced by processes like scientific discoveries or the spread of networks and acceleration of mobility. The recent literature increasingly includes mobility and related to it ambivalences of inclusion, disembededness, and access considered as globally normal (ex. Albrow et al. 1994, Hannerz 1996, Gupta and Ferguson 1997, Berking 1998, Kennedy 2004, Favell 2003). The discipline that traditionally focused on particular territorially fixed communities, as anthropology did, moves towards “mobile fields” in their expertise. However, there is still no consensus on the interpretation of these phenomena: many authors stress the negative role of mobility on personal social networks and identity, whereas others see it as a possibility of enlarging the individuals’ life-space.

To prove the change alone at one level seems a dubious task. To grasp the change means necessarily to grasp the mutual influences at all levels at the same time. At the level of human spatialisation, new and old patterns of fixation of socio-spatial processes appear together. More than one logic of spatial constitution competes: regional logic represented for example by nation states, network logic of transnational organizations, or fluid logic (Mol and Law 1994) of indifferently transforming processes. At the same time, it is necessary to remember, that the scientific comprehension of space is an integral part of the processes of spatialisation, and the observers’s (social scientists) imagination and interpretation of spatial relations and its production are interrelated.

The empirical findings, which could be presented only in limited scope here, cast doubt on the sense of distinguishing phases within modernity, or at least question their time framework. The more apparent this problem becomes when we accept the thesis of dissonances, conflicts and contradictions, and relationality and non-linear development, the

latest proclaimed also by other authors (Urry 2003, 2004, Byrne 1998, Cilliers 1998). When investigating into spatial relations it becomes evident that the processes of change are dynamic, long-term and full of contradictions, and the change less sudden than hoped. Perhaps instead of trying in vain to pin-down the moment of change, the research should rather open up the perspective, and focus on better understanding of contemporary spatial (re)production.

The theses of the theory of reflexive modernization proves an interesting launching point for further study. Especially interesting results may be achieved when focusing on contradictions and conflicts between various perspectives. Interesting is how the transformation of the discourse on space influences common understanding of it and individual practices. Certainly one aspect which still needs to be researched is how certain imaginations of space institutionalize and are made durable in time. Yet the key to understanding spatialisation is in my opinion to increase the investigation of the temporal dimensions of space. The research should focus on dynamic processes (change in time), multiplicity of spaces in time (simultaneity) as well as plurality of trajectories (multiple times) in space. Including of temporal dimensions in the research necessarily leads to a revision of the concept of periodisation. The empirical findings suggest that a more radical approach (or a radical application of the theory of reflexive modernization) would better reflect the contemporary processes. Such a radical (second-modern) methodology would admit the impossibility of sharp distinction between epochs which are necessary fluent and multi-dimensional. The consequence would be to abandon container view on space and on time and research both as mobile dimensions of social structuration. Time in this approach should not be single, unified and metric, dividible into containers, each including a particular spatial principle (as space was presumed to divide societies into separate units). Only within this container view on time, spaces can be kaleidoscopic, multiplied within simultaneity. A radical (second-modern) approach would not be able to order time and space on a temporal axis. It could also not abstract space from what it is not, as well as not divide space into distinct units to research flows between them. Such approach would need to apply in practice theoretical considerations

of the theory of reflexive modernization, which the theory itself does not do; thus, it would in a sense go beyond the second modernity, which is able to make distinctions which daily mobility has already blurred.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Some authors have noticed that such assumptions are misleading and proposed not to divide social and geographical mobility but rather to speak of motility (Kaufmann 2002, Kaufmann et al. 2004). This has in turn implications for their understanding of time-space. However, in my opinion, the idea of time-space as constructed in social practices and therefore undividable from the social realm results rather from transposing the understanding of mobility on time-space. Consequently, these studies focus on motility and not on exact spatial relations and their construction in practices of individuals. The exact analysis of these studies would exceed the scope of this paper, is yet not further relevant for the argument presented here.



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